

# Understanding the Standing Joint Force Headquarters

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**T**HE U.S. JOINT FORCES Command (JFCOM) has developed a joint concept development and experimentation strategy along two paths: a joint concept development path and a joint prototype path. The concept development path explores a broad range of ideas and concepts, while the prototype path pursues rapid fielding of capabilities that improve joint warfighting in the near term.

For several years, JFCOM has experimented with various concepts for future command and control (C2) elements. A May 2000 white paper discusses an adaptive joint C2 concept, which is "a redesigned, functionally oriented, standing core headquarters element [to] support operational requirements described in the emerging Rapid Decisive Operations (RDO) concept."<sup>1</sup>

In the summer of 2000, JFCOM sponsored an RDO war game to consider a standing C2 organization. Unified Vision 2001 findings reinforced the value of establishing a standing organization, and in 2002, JFCOM formed a prototype standing joint force headquarters (SJFHQ) to demonstrate this concept during Millennium Challenge 2002 (MC02).<sup>2</sup>

## MC02

MC02 involved all services, most combatant commands, other Department of Defense organizations, and several federal agencies. Future force concepts and capabilities from various services were represented, such as an airborne command post, the U.S. Air Force's Expeditionary Aerospace Force, the U.S. Army's Stryker brigade, and a joint Army-Navy high-speed vessel. The scenario was a high-end, small-scale contingency having the potential of escalating to a major theater war.

Variously described as training, an exercise, an experiment, a test, and a demonstration, MC02 actually served all these purposes. Participants were situ-

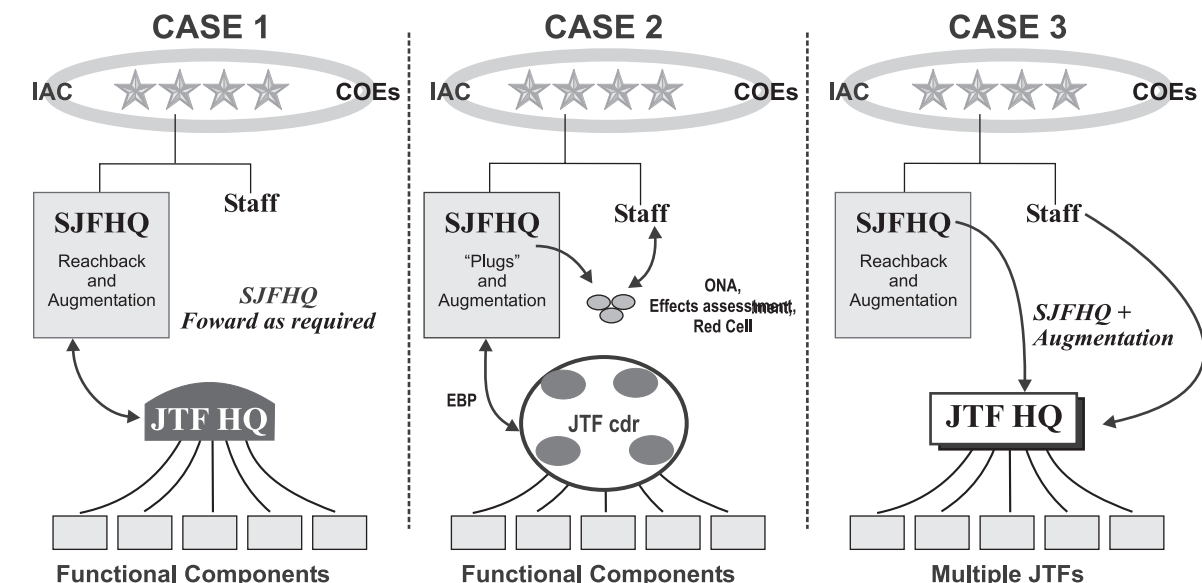
ated at locations stretching from ships off California to installations on the Atlantic coast. Over 20,000 members of all services participated in live, virtual, or constructive environments, all coordinated from JFCOM. The Army elected to integrate several events, from conducting training involving an airborne forced entry and the Stryker at Fort Irwin, California, to exercising C2 from Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

JFCOM's goals and objectives included assessing concepts and capabilities and hardware and software to measure a joint task force's (JTF's) ability to implement advanced warfighting concepts when equipped with transformational capabilities. The SJFHQ was one of these capabilities. Each service participated on a unique basis.

Originally intended as a proving ground for the RDO concept, MC02 morphed into the first significant application of effects-based operations (EBO) as defined by JFCOM. Initially intended to support RDO, EBO became the houseguest who not only would not leave, but who slowly took over the household. EBO evolved into a primary prototype concept, while RDO faded.

However, real-world requirements produced a better demonstration than RDO could have. The three-star headquarters originally designated to participate in MC02 received a real-world mission that required it to be replaced by another headquarters at the last minute.

One of the direct results of MC02 was instruction from the Secretary of Defense (SecDef) to implement SJFHQ. Joint doctrine has not kept up with the latest transformational initiatives such as the SJFHQ, however. Consequently, outside the joint community and the combatant commands, the implications of the initiative are not widely known or well understood.



IAC-intelligence analysis centers; COEs-Centers of Excellence; SJFHQ-Standing Joint Task Force Headquarters; JTF HQ-Joint Task Force Headquarters; ONA-Operational Net Assessment; JTF Cdr-Joint Task Force Commander; TF-Joint Task Force

Figure 1. SJFHQ employment options.

## The SJFHQ and JTF Formation

The SJFHQ organization is relatively simple. All services are represented in the SJFHQ, as most combat support and combat service support elements are. Administratively, the SJFHQ is composed of six groups: command, information superiority, plans, operations, knowledge management, and logistics. Functionally, it has four primary teams: information superiority, plans, operations, and knowledge management. Logistics members are merged into the various teams. Some members are multidisciplinary, but all support various boards, centers, and cells in the combat command, the JTF, and the SJFHQ. These are unique working groups.

During pre-crisis or deliberate planning, the SJFHQ is a combatant command asset. As the situation develops and crisis-action planning looms, the combatant commander must determine whether a JTF is required and, if so, how to employ it. Through reachback and the collaborative information environment (CIE), the SJFHQ's full capability might be assigned to the JTF even though the SJFHQ's full complement of personnel might not deploy. Figure 1 depicts three possible deployment configurations.

The term "SJFHQ" is somewhat misleading. More than one JFCOM document describes the SJFHQ as a C2 element. However, the SJFHQ's day-to-day, pre-crisis function is to serve as a planning staff element, creating situational understanding of focus areas that a combatant commander designates, and

help with subsequent effects-based planning (EBP).

The combatant commander might choose to augment the SJFHQ significantly, turning it into a JTF, but this is only feasible for short-duration crises. A combatant commander concerned about another imminent crisis within his geographical area of responsibility might attach the SJFHQ to the JTF just long enough to bring the JTF headquarters up to speed and then bring the SJFHQ home. The system of systems analysts (SoSAs) cell might not deploy at all. Elements that do deploy are typically disseminated throughout the JTF staff, but this is the JTF commander's decision.

One of the greatest challenges to every JTF is how to quickly understand the situation it was formed to address while it is in the middle of a crisis. JTFs are ad hoc organizations created on a relatively temporary basis to answer a specific operational need. They need time to ramp up to become operational and to achieve full situational understanding, yet headquarters is required to absorb a variety of folks to organize along J-staff lines and to establish an acronym soup of boards, centers, and cells—all while deploying to the area of operations (AO).

When a JTF is formed where the combatant commander has an SJFHQ, the SJFHQ begins conveying to the JTF headquarters the situational understanding. The SJFHQ supplies an inherently joint structure, standing availability, and information age capabilities, thus providing the means for the JTF to

employ advanced warfighting capabilities.<sup>3</sup> This is the SJFHQ's great value and purpose. To the extent directed by the combatant commander, the SJFHQ's personnel, tools, knowledge, and processes expand the JTF's ability to use the Joint Operation Planning and Execution System (JOPES) and shift the JTF into EBO.

### **A Life Preserver for the Data Flood**

Transforming from JOPES to EBP/EBO is not simple. One of the fundamental concepts required is knowledge management (KM). Modern headquarters are drowning in information. Data streams begin this flood. They might come from a video feed from an unmanned aerial vehicle, a stream of numbers from a seismic sensor reporting ground traffic, or infrared photos from a satellite sensor. Once analyzed, data become information. When properly placed in context, information becomes knowledge. Key bits of information allow the appropriate recipient to make a particular decision.

Knowledge management is neither another new term for information management nor is it technical support or information technology. Aspects of each of these three specialties are required in the JTF, and knowledge managers must be conversant to varying degrees in all of them. The best knowledge managers have a solid operations background and are technologically savvy.

Proper KM enables situational awareness—knowing what the enemy is doing—and situational understanding—knowing why he is doing it. To achieve and maintain situational understanding, CIE is required.

### **The CIE**

A CIE is composed of infrastructure, people, procedures, and tools. Knowledge managers become facilitators: first-level subject matter experts on tools, training coordinators for the application of information, and monitors of procedure. They ensure information is shared, not withheld.

Infrastructure and tools are the easy parts of a CIE to establish, at least in the continental United States (CONUS). Modern headquarters generally have sufficient infrastructure. In locations outside CONUS, such as in Iraq, infrastructure might present a significant obstacle. SJFHQ supplies the required network servers and computer applications.

Tools and procedures are categorized as synchronous or asynchronous. Synchronous collaboration is sharing information in real time. An example of synchronous collaboration is using a telephone. Mailing a letter, sending an E-mail message, or looking

something up on the Internet exemplifies asynchronous collaboration.

Specific software applications are not as much of a concern in establishing a CIE as meeting required capabilities is. Collaborative software that facilitates virtual meetings and conferences is a mandatory synchronous tool. A common operating picture is an essential synchronous or near-synchronous capability. A logistics common relevant operating picture is a recent addition still under development.

As a CIE tool, the operational net assessment (ONA) database provides one asynchronous capability. Another asynchronous requirement is a means of sharing documents and files of all types by all users that is not bandwidth intensive. Currently, a Web portal provides that capability. While many organizations have created Web pages to support operations, one of the strengths of the CIE Web portal is that once designed and established, it is user-maintained and operated.

### **EBP and EBO**

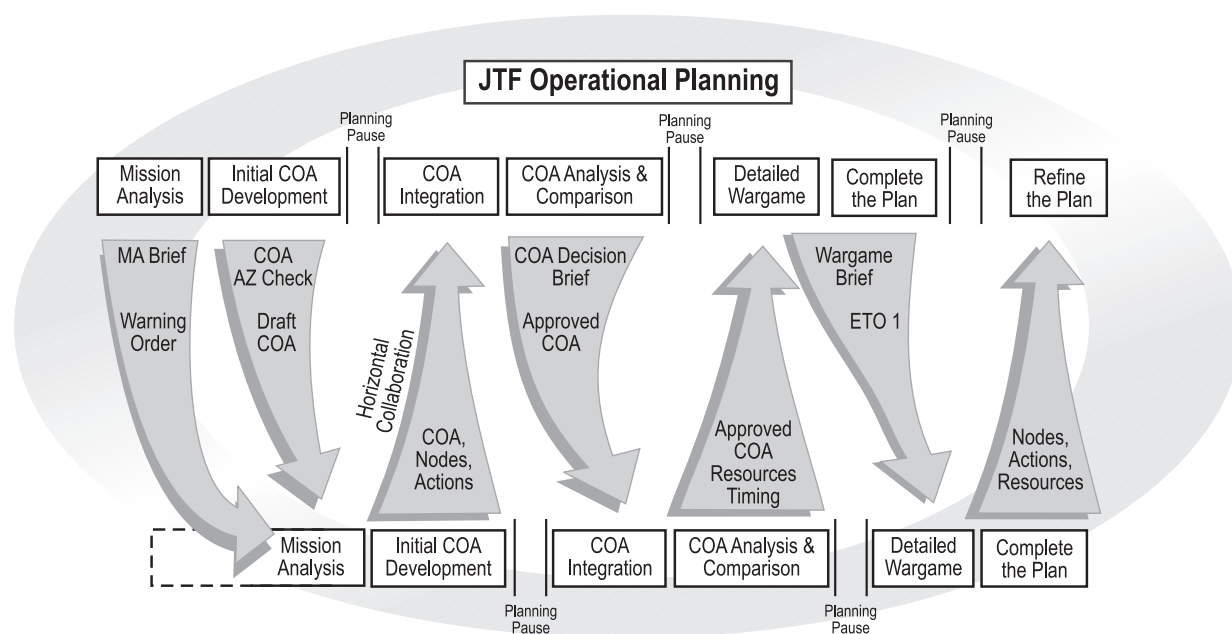
Thorough EBP/EBO entails effects imposed by every element of power in diplomatic, information, military, and economic (DIME) areas. The key word to understanding EBP and EBO is "effects," which means more than simply blowing things up. Military power is brought to bear because other elements of power have either missed their opportunity or are not EBO driven.

The term "ONA" is used to describe a CIE tool, but ONA is also a process and a product. As a process, ONA provides the basis for EBP, serving as a way to focus federal agencies' efforts on providing pertinent expertise and information for holistic analysis of adversaries and the potential effects operations might have on them. Constant monitoring and updating of the ONA by military and nonmilitary organizations achieve an unprecedented depth of understanding of an opponent's national systems.

When the combatant commander assigns a focus area to his SJFHQ, he also issues a mission statement and initial planning guidance. Using that mission and guidance, the SJFHQ's SoSAs analyze the designated region or nation, modeling it as a system of nodes.

The SoSAs identify links between nodes, which are categorized as political, military, economic, social, information, and infrastructure (PMESII). A node can be an individual, such as a defense minister, or a location, such as a power plant, mosque, factory, military force, or post office.

The joint planning group (JPG) is responsible for planning in the JTF. Various staff elements and



AZ-azimuth; COA-Course of Action; ETO-Effects Tasking Order; JTF-Joint Task Force; MA-mission analysis

Figure 2. Integrated collaborative planning.

subordinate service components are represented in the JPG. The joint interagency coordination group (JIACG) is primarily composed of such governmental organizations as the CIA, FBI, Department of the Treasury, or Department of State. Some members (academicians, recent immigrants, or businessmen with extensive experience in the AO) come from centers of excellence.

While the JPG and JIACG are not new organizations to combatant commands and JTFs, they participate in new processes. Representatives of these groups, with the SJFHQ's effects working group and service component representatives, identify actions and tasks that they believe are capable of achieving desired effects at the various nodes.

Service and agency participation is essential because they effectively perform various tasks and actions and determine how to carry out the assigned task. Typically, planning and analysis require 30 to 60 days during the deliberate planning phase. Many desired effects will be nonlethal and non-military.

A mature ONA for a single focus area will likely entail thousands of nodes and associated relationships, tasks, and potential effects. The ONA tool is an efficient automated system that provides decisionmakers a way to determine how to coerce the enemy, preferably without firing a shot.

Combatant command and JTF planners use the ONA analysis and database to devise plans for a

particular adversary based on a continual analysis of the relationships between the enemy's national bases of power. If an organization is not using the ONA database, it probably is not conducting EBO. The full EBO process involves too many staffs, personnel, and agencies. The product is simply too detailed, intricate, and large to be done effectively without the ONA tool or something comparable.

Identifying key high-payoff nodes can begin with a sufficiently advanced ONA. With these in hand, courses of action (COAs) are prepared, analysis conducted, and a recommendation made to the JTF or combatant commander. EBP begins in earnest once a decision is made. Final products from the process include an operations plan (OPLAN) or operations order (OPORD) and an effects tasking order (ETO). Pre-crisis, these serve as the baseline plans for the JTF when it is formed.

ONAs are never complete. Once they are sufficiently advanced, they are used for decision support and planning, but like any plan, as time and situations evolve, they require updating. Once operations begin, persistent monitoring, tweaking, and adjustment provide the JTF commander superior decision-making capability.

When EBO begins, effects assessment uses measures of performance and measures of effectiveness (MOEs) to monitor progress and assess intended and unintended effects of operations. If MOEs do not match expectations, reassessing the

node, desired effects, and plan might be indicated. The SoSAs continually conduct this process, and the JPG reviews it periodically. When the other DIME elements prove sufficient, the JTF or combatant commander might not need to apply military force in a particular situation.

One significant benefit of an SJFHQ-equipped headquarters is an abbreviated decisionmaking process. The reduced time from planning to execution essentially arises from two sources: the ONA-based decisionmaking process and the staff's inclusionary practices and processes. The ONA-based decision process rapidly formulates plans and modifies decisions as effects assessment creates an ongoing iterative process that continually updates the ONA and all its products. The staff's inclusionary practices and processes also help reduce time needed.

All planners and decisionmakers share information and knowledge vertically and horizontally. For example, in a noncollaborative headquarters, subordinate commands await the JTF's selection of a COA before they begin their own COA development. Figure 2 portrays how a collaborative process enables parallel planning. Instead of a JTF issuing an analysis, directive, or order that initiates a subordinate staff's analysis and decisionmaking process, the subordinate staff participates in the JTF's decision process. By participating in the higher headquarters' analysis and planning, the subordinate headquarters can conduct its own analysis and planning almost simultaneously. At the operational level, the old one-third/two-thirds rule becomes one-third/and a little bit.

## Fielding Underway

The SJFHQ is not just a drawing-board concept. The SecDef's direction that each combatant command possess a SJFHQ by 2005 is found in defense planning guidance. However, several combatant commands requested this capability sooner. Consequently, fielding is already underway. The 18th Airborne Corps successfully employed many aspects of the CIE in Afghanistan, just weeks after using them during MC02.

The standard SJFHQ is staffed with 58 people plus a 6-man SoSA cell. Different headquarters are taking different approaches, however. One elected to adopt the standard. Another decided it needed at least two. A third is applying SJFHQ organizational and procedural concepts and capabilities throughout the headquarters. Following extensive training of each combatant command's target audience, a forming event confirms progress and a focus event verifies operational capability.

U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM), Pacific Command (PACOM), and European Command are the first to begin the process. SOUTHCOM and PACOM recently underwent their forming events. Plans are underway to provide these capabilities to Combined Joint Task Force 7 in Iraq. U.S. Northern Command, Central Command, Strategic Command, and Transportation Command are other headquarters currently working with JFCOM to develop the transformational capabilities involved. Coordination is underway to ensure close cooperation between SJFHQ-equipped combatant command and JFCOM as the SJFHQ concept continues to mature and evolve.

## Implementation

EBO and SJFHQ capabilities are fully developed and being fielded. These capabilities enable combatant commanders to become more proactive. JTFs have usually been established during or just before a crisis, when the likelihood of benefits from applying other elements of power is low.

The potential advantages of a PMESII- or EBO-oriented OPLAN or OPORD and associated ETO are drastically reduced and might approach zero if they are not implemented before military intervention is required. Consequently, EBO must be initiated earlier than is currently the practice. The non-military elements of power are too time-consuming and often of little interest to a public clamoring for action or national leaders who are demanding immediate results.

The SJFHQ supplies a means of mobilizing national elements of power beyond the combatant commander's personal, high-level interagency contacts as a concern or crisis develops. The SJFHQ's processes and procedures establish standing, long-term interagency relationships and contacts.

Combatant commanders can implement OPLANs, OPORDs, and ETOs residing on the shelf as required. The empowering interagency relationships developed during EBP render their entire staffs capable of becoming significant participants in EBO, before military intervention is required. This is the objective end state of EBO. The SJFHQ provides the means of attaining that goal. **MR**

## NOTES

1. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Warfighting Center Doctrine Pamphlet 3, *Doctrinal Implications of the Standing Joint Force Headquarters (SJFHQ)* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 16 June 2003), 2.

2. Ibid.

3. Standing Joint Force Headquarters-Prototype Concept of Employment, 25 June 2003, preface.

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